

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 September 2021

Helen Ginger
Headteacher
Stewards Academy - Science Specialist, Harlow
Parnall Road
Harlow
Essex
CM18 7NQ

Dear Mrs Ginger

No formal designation inspection of Stewards Academy - Science Specialist, Harlow

Following my visit with Paul Wilson, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 13 July 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for no formal designation (NFD) inspections. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance) and behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

We do not give graded judgements on NFD inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection and will be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the NFD inspection to be a section 5 inspection immediately.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with you, other leaders, the vice-chair of the trust, groups of staff and groups of pupils. We also spoke with staff and pupils informally around the school. We reviewed behaviour records and

spoke with a representative of the local authority. We reviewed the 17 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

There are 1086 pupils on the school roll. There is a relatively high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and a relatively high proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans. The school has recently undertaken work to reduce its overall level of staffing from September 2021.

Main findings

Prior to the inspection, concerns were raised with Ofsted about the effectiveness of leaders' safeguarding arrangements and about how well staff deal with bullying.

Your systems for keeping pupils safe are effective. Staff are trained annually on how to keep pupils safe. They receive updated guidance as it becomes relevant. For example, staff had additional training about cyber bullying and domestic violence following the most recent national lockdown. Staff are trained on how to spot the signs of abuse and they know how to report concerns to safeguarding leaders.

There were some minor errors in your generally well-kept single central record of pre-employment checks. These were promptly resolved during the inspection. Other records show that you log, and take appropriate action to follow up, concerns raised about pupils' well-being. You work with external agencies to secure the help pupils need. You procure a counselling service for pupils to access in school. You liaise with, and seek advice from, the local authority when concerns about adults are brought to your attention.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe. They have learned, for example, about healthy relationships, drug awareness and the safe use of social media. They know whom to speak to in school if they are worried about something.

Some of the pastoral work staff undertake to help pupils is discussed at a weekly meeting with a member of the safeguarding staff team. The notes from these meetings are brief, meaning some of the work staff undertake is not recorded. This does not undermine your systems for keeping pupils safe, but it makes it more difficult to quickly pinpoint some of the support pupils get.

Pupils generally behave well around the school. However, there has been a decline from the high standards of behaviour seen at the previous inspection. There are times when pupils do not pay enough attention in class and there is some disruption

to learning. There is some bullying and some intolerant behaviour in school. This is not rife but it does happen. It is not always dealt with well. A minority of pupils repeatedly misbehave, despite the intervention of leaders.

Part of the drop in standards can be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Pupils did not follow normal school routines during their time away from school. Some are struggling to readjust to your expectations.

There is also inconsistency in the use of your behaviour policy. Some teachers do not manage behaviour well, allowing pupils to talk over them or not complete work, for example. Some staff do not resolve effectively pupils' concerns about bullying.

You have started to bring about improvements. Your recent 'foundation focus' is helping. You are reaffirming basic rules, such as the wearing of correct uniform and punctuality, one by one. Staff have confidence in your approach. They have seen a noticeable improvement in recent weeks.

External support

You engage a counselling service to support pupils with their mental and emotional well-being. Pupils value and use this service. You work with external partners, such as the local authority, in following up on safeguarding concerns. These partnerships help you to keep pupils safe.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make sure all incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour are dealt with well.
- Re-establish high expectations of behaviour among all staff and pupils.
- Improve the recording of the actions of pastoral staff so that it is easy to find out what support different pupils are getting.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector